

I appreciate you having me. I ask for the Almighty's blessings on you, and may He continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:38 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to R. David Paulison, Director, Federal Emergency Management Agency, who introduced the President; Mayor Jim Hoover of Emmitsburg, MD; Gregory B. Cade, Federal Emergency Management Agency Assistant Administrator for the U.S. Fire Administration; Richard L. McCormick, president, Rutgers University; and Richard Schmidt, firefighter, New York City Fire Department.

Remarks Following a Meeting on the No Child Left Behind Act Reauthorization

October 9, 2007

Secretary Spellings and I are so pleased to welcome you all to the Roosevelt Room. With us today are a group of concerned citizens from a variety of groups, here to discuss the No Child Left Behind Act. People around this table care deeply about making sure every child gets a good education. We're deeply concerned about school systems that don't focus on each individual. Some school systems are just moving kids through, and as a result, our education system is letting too many children down, too many families without hope. So we're going to strategize and work together to make sure the No Child Left Behind Act is reauthorized and made stronger.

And so I want to thank you all for coming. I love your passion. I appreciate the fact that you care deeply about the future of this country and that you believe, like I believe, every child can learn, and we have an obligation to teach every child how to read and write and add and subtract.

So thank you for joining us. We'll see you all in the Rose Garden here in a minute.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:06 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings. Also participating in the meeting were the First Lady; John C. Brittain, chief counsel and senior deputy director, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law; Roslyn

McCallister Brock, vice chairman, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People National Board of Directors; Michael Casserly, executive director, Council of the Great City Schools; Wade Henderson, president and chief executive officer, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights; Lawrence Hernandez, founder, chief executive officer, and principal, Cesar Chavez Academy, Pueblo, CO; Marc H. Morial, president and chief executive officer, National Urban League; Janet Murguia, president and chief executive officer, National Council of La Raza; Dianne Pich, executive director, Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights; Sonia Rodriguez, chairperson, Coalition for Access to Educational Resources; Ricki Sabia, associate director, National Down Syndrome Society Policy Center; Amy Wilkins, vice president for government affairs and communications, The Education Trust; and Peter Zamora, cochair, Hispanic Education Coalition.

Remarks on the No Child Left Behind Act Reauthorization

October 9, 2007

Good afternoon. Thank you all for coming. I want to thank Secretary Spellings for joining me here. And I appreciate you all—the leaders of the civil rights community and advocates for minority and disadvantaged students—for joining us as well.

We just had a meaningful discussion about our joint commitment to closing an achievement gap that exists in America. We discussed why reauthorizing the No Child Left Behind Act is vital in ensuring that we have a hopeful America. We don't necessarily agree on every issue, but we do agree that education is a basic civil right and that a good education is important for America.

We agree that our Nation has reached a defining moment in our struggle to secure a good education for every child. And we've come a long way since the days when children were simply shuffled through the schools, just moved grade to grade, whether or not they were learning. See, we believe every child can learn. We don't accept a system that simply shuffles children through the schools. We believe in setting high standards. And we believe that by setting high standards, we encourage greater results for every child. And now the question is whether or not we will finish the job to ensure that every